# The Wisconsin Winnebagoes

## THE WISCONSIN WINNEBAGOES

### R. G. Thwaites AN INTERVIEW WITH MOSES PAQUETTE, BY THE EDITOR.1

1 March 25, 1887, I started from Madison with Moses Paquette, government interpreter for the Wisconsin Winnebagoes, to visit Spoon Decorah and other head men of the tribe in Adams county. Our expedition closed at Portage, March 80. What information I was able to obtain from Paquette, in conversations during our trip, I have formulated into a continuous narrative, following his manner of expression as closely os practicable. The prepared *MS*. I carefully read over to him on the eighteenth of May following at Black River Falls, and made such changes as he suggested, As it is now printed, it received his approval. I found Paquette an earnest, truthful man, and bearing an excellent reputation as such in his community and among the Winnebagoes. To the latter, he is a counsellor and friend, arbitrating their little disputes as far as possible, offering them advice, and acting as their spokesman on many occasions; all of which he does out of pure good nature and at much sacrifice of time and convenience, for the government merely grants him a per diem for attendance on the payment of annuities. He is a familiar figure on the streets of Black River Falls, every Saturday, when he may be seen throughout the day surrounded by groups of Indians who look up to him as an oracle,—and the son of an oracle, for his father, Pierre Paquette, was long a power among the Winnebagoes. His influence among these simple people seems always for the best.— Ed.

I was born on the fourth of March, 1828, in the dwelling occupied by my father, Pierre Paquette, near the old agency house,2 which latter is still standing on the bank of the Fox river at Portage. Besides this dwelling, my father, who was employed by the American Fur Company, had a trading house and barracks for the five or six men whom he then engaged in the business of portaging boats across the almost two miles of marsh which

here separate the Fox and Wisconsin rivers. Boats coming up the Fox would be beached at a point near the mouth of the present canal.

2 See diagram of Ft. Winnebago in 1835, *Hist. Columbia Co*. (West. Hist. Co., 1881), p. 342, and frontispiece.— Ed.

400 The beach on the Wisconsin river was very near where, at a later period, the Carpenter house was built.1 The intervening marsh was in those days often a mere quagmire, the transportation of heavily-laden Mackinaw boats across it being a task involving much expenditure of time and patience. It took four and five yoke of oxen to haul one of these craft, which would be slung upon a huge reach cut out of a tree and mounted on broad wheels.2

1 In 1837. *Hist. Columbia Co*., P. 588.— Ed.

2 *Wis. Hist. Coll*., vii., p. 371.— Ed.

My mother, who was a daughter of Joseph Crelie, was married at Prairie du Chien to one Lupient,3 before she married my father. By Lupient she had one child, Theodore, who was run over and killed by a railway train in Chicago in 1860. The elder Lupient died soon after the marriage, and his widow became united with my father in Prairie du Chien in 1818. The first fruits of this union were Xavier and Jean Baptiste, who died within a day or two of each other, before my birth. Both of them were buried in the Catholic cemetery at Prairie du Chien. My sister, Thérèse J., was born in Portage in 1826, two years before my birth. In 1864 she married Thomas Prescott, a farmer of Irish birth. The Prescotts now live in the town of Caledonia, Columbia county, on section 28, town 12, range 8 east. I remember my maternal grandfather, Crelie, quite well, but am certain that he was not as old—one hundred and thirty years—as many have made him out to be; in 1845, he told me that he was then eighty years of age, and as he died at Caledonia in 1865,4 he was by his own showing not over a hundred. As the years went on. having no fixed knowledge of his age, he doubtless innocently fell into the habit, common

3 Probably Theodore Lupin, mentioned as an early settler at Prairie du Chien “before the year 1820.” *Hist. Crawford Co*. (West. Hist. Co., 1884), p. 281.— Ed.

4 January 27, 1866. See *Wis. Hist. Coll*., ix., p. 293, where it is rememputed that Crelie was about ninety-four years of age at the time of his death. He contended that he was one hundred and thirty, but it is abundantly shown in various volumes of *Wis. Hist. Coll*., that such was not the case.— Ed.

401 enough with old men in his station of life, of claiming an age that he had never reached. He may have been over a hundred, but certainly not much over that.

In 1834, my father moved from the Fox river to the Wisconsin, locating on the knoll just west of the south end of the bridge, about where the old ferry used to be. I do not think father did any transportation business after his removal, but he erected a trading house, a dwelling, and two or three farm buildings; the trading house and parts of the dwelling are still in existence, having in later years been moved by subsequent owners of the land to locations from a dozen to twenty rods distant, to do duty as farm sheds. L.W. Barden is the present owner of the place where father's establishment was situated.

As a boy, I did not often visit Fort Winnebago, so have but faint recollections of the officers in charge there, although I well remember Captain Gideon Lowe, who was one of the last officers in charge of the government property. He afterwards kept a large and well-patronized tavern, called the Franklin house, on the transportation route, within a few rods northeast of where the Wisconsin Central railway depot now is; a portion of the house is still (1887) standing and occupied as a tenement.1 The captain was a large, well-built man, of kindly habits and generally popular. The Indians thought a good deal of him. My sister, Mrs. Prescott, says that she remembers as far back as Captain Hooe's time.2 Hooe married one of Joseph Rolette's daughters, and was more or less interested in the Indian trade.

1 *Hist. Columbia Co*., pp. 355, 588. *Wis. Hist. Coll*., vi., p. 406, *note*.— Ed.

2 *Wis. Hist. Coll*., vii, p. 850.— Ed.

I remember very well the appearance of the small-pox scourge among the Winnebagoes in 1834, when one quarter of the tribe fell victims.3 The Indians had never heard of its like before. The medicine men soon abandoned their futile attempts to stay the ravages of the pest, and the survivors simply fled before it like a herd of stricken deer, 26

3 *Wis. Hist. Coll*., v., p. 264.— Ed.

402 leaving their dead and dying behind them, unburied. My father was himself obliged to bury a great number of them, as a sanitary necessity. None of our family were afflicted with the disease, for we were vaccinated at the fort by the military surgeon, at the first appearance of the trouble.

My father, as has been amply recorded in history, was killed at Portage, near the Wisconsin river, in October, 1836, by Mauzemoneka (Iron Walker), a son of the Winnebago chief Whirling Thunder, who had at the time a camp on the high land north of the city end of the present Wisconsin river bridge.1 Pierre Paquette, at the time of his death, was considered a well-to-do man for those times. The Winnebagoes owed him $20,000 for goods which he had furnished them; he had a good deal of live stock, some of it on the farm by the bridge, but the most of it on his farm named Bellefontaine, twelve miles northeast of the fort, on the Green Bay military road; and it has been told me by Laurent Rolette,2 his clerk, that he had in addition to this, $20,000 in cash, in the safe. He was not only doing a big business in the regular Indian trade, but did most of the supplying of beef and horses to the Winnebago tribe. The Bellefontaine farm3 was conducted by a Frenchman whom he hired for the purpose, live stock being the specialty. In fact, blackbirds were so numerous in those days that it was quite useless to raise grain. Father used to hire Indian lads by the dozen, and keep them supplied with ammunition for

the purpose of killing the feathered pests, which were slaughtered by the thousand each season, but with no apparent diminution of the number.

1 For contemporary statements of the affair, see *Hist. Columbia Co*., pp. 499–508.— Ed.

2 A brother of Joseph Rolette, of Prairie du Chien.— Ed.

3 *Wis. Hist. Coll*., vii., p. 371.— Ed.

The administrators of the estate were H. L. Donsman, of Prairie du Chien,4 and Joseph Paquette, of Green Bay. This Paquette was a farmer, a cousin of my father.5 Mr.

4 See *Hist. Crawford Co*., p. 300, for sketch of his career.— Ed.

5 Morgan L. Martin, of Green Bay, wrote me, under date of October 14, 1887: “I knew Joseph Paquette well. When I came here first [1827] he was occupying a small farm of Judge Lawe, under lease, and was then lately married to a Miss Lecuyer. He was an uneducated Frenchman, but quite thrifty and enterprising, and soon acquired a competence by his own unaided labor; and when he died, left a comfortable estate for his children. Pierre Paquette, who was killed at Portage, was a relative (perhaps a cousin) of Joseph, and his estate was administered by him and H. L. Dousman, who represented the creditors of deceased.”— Ed.

403 Dousman was general agent for the American Fur Company, for Prairie du Chien, Portage, and Green Bay.1 Very soon the company and many private individuals brought in claims against the estate, all of which were allowed, the result being that everything was swallowed up except the bare Bellefontaine farm, the stock from which was driven off to Green Bay, along with the other animals, and there sold to liquidate the debts.

1 General Donsman became, in 1834, in company with Joseph Rolette, Sr., one of the copartners of the American Fur Company, With especial charge of the Prairie du Chien agency, which embraced the country north and west of that village, to the British boundary,

except the headwaters of the Mississippi and St. Croix. See *Hist. Crawford Co*., p. 300.—Ed.

Among the property which was swallowed up in this way were two sections of land which were granted by the treaty of 1832 to my sister and me, near Taycheedah,—part of the land being now included in the present corporation limits of Fond du Lac. We never saw this land. It was granted to us because of my father's relation to the nebago tribe, and his services to the government.2

2 Article 10 of the treaty concluded September 15, 1832, between the United States and the Winnebagoes, at Rock Island, says: “At the special request of the Winnebago nation, the United States agree to grant, by patent, in fee simple, to the following named persons, all of whom are Winnebagoes by blood, lands as follows: To Pierre Paquette, three sections; to Pierre Paquette, Junior, one section; to Therese Paquette one section; and to Caroline Haney, one section. The lands to be designated under the direction of the president of the United States, within the country herein ceded by the Winnebago nation.” — Ed.

In 1829, my father and his two children were granted a section apiece by the government, in town 8, range 8 east, near Madison.3 My father's section, with some neighboring

3 Article 5 of the treaty concluded August 1, 1829, between the United Stages and the Winnebagoes, at Prairie du Chien, grants “to Pierre Pacquette two sections; and to his two children, Therese and Moses, each one section,” of “land located without the mineral country, under the direction of the president.”— Ed.

 that he had purchased, also became involved in the toils in some mysterious way; and although many years afterwards I recovered it in behalf of the family, by litigation conducted at Madison, the property slipped through our fingers through over-confidence in certain persons, and was lost.

Our land at the south end of the Portage bridge was a claim, father having been permitted to settle there by the tribe, he contracting to run a ferry-boat and trading post for their accommodation. After his death, my mother, who became married to a man named Walsworth, formally entered it. There were ninety-three acres in the tract. In May, 1857, Walsworth having died some few years previous, we sold and moved from this place, both because of frequent overflows of the Wisconsin river, and the fear that it would be eaten up in taxes, the tract having become incorporated in the city limits of Portage. We removed our possessions to sections 27 and 28, town 12, range 8 east, where my mother had bought a hundred and sixty acres. She afterwards gave eighty acres of this to my sister Thérèse,—upon which the latter now lives,—and died at her home there on the sixteenth Of March, 1864, aged about seventy years.

I have spoken of Rollette, my father's clerk. Our family placed great confidence in him. He had our affairs wholly in his hands to the time the administrators took charge, and, so far as we could find out, he never violated a trust. John de la Ronde was Rolette's predecessor as clerk to my father.1 I remember him, both as my father's clerk and as he was in after years. He was a wonderful storyteller, and used, I thought, to stretch the long bow about early days at the Portage. He lived on the Baraboo bluffs, where he died several years ago.

1 *Wis. Hist. Coll*., viii., p. 320. See also, De la Ronde's narrative, *Wis. Hist. Coll*., vii., pp. 345 *et seq*.— Ed.

Two years after my father's death, when I was ten years 405 old, my sister and I were sent by our guardian, H. L. Dousman, for education in English, to the Presbyterian Indian mission on the Yellow river, Iowa,— the “neutral ground” of those days. Rev. David Lowrey was the superintendent.1 His assistants were two young ladies,—Minerva and Lucy

1 David Lowrey, D.D., Cumberland Presbyterian preacher, was born in Logan county, Kentucky, January 20, 1796. He was licensed and ordained to the care of Logan

presbytery. December 16, 1830, he began the publication, at Princeton. Kentucky, under church auspices, of a weekly journal called *The Religious and Literary Intelligencer*. Some years afterward, he was editor of *The Cumberland Presbyterian*, published at Nashville, Tennessee. During this latter experience, he was also pastor of the Cumberland Presbyterian church. in Nashville; “and for his year's pastoral labor he received, as compensation, the astonishing sum of *one wagon lead of corn in the shuck!*” In 1882, he was appointed by his friend, President Jackson, as teacher to the Winnebagoes, arriving at Prairie du Chien in November of that Year. By the treaty of Rock Island, September 15, 1839, the government had agreed (Article 4)to “erect a suitable building, or buildings, with a garden and a field attached, somewhere near Fort Crawford. or Prairie du Chien, and establish and maintain therein, for the term of 27 years, a school for the education, including clothing, beard, and lodging, of such Winnebago children as may be voluntarily sent to it. The school to be conducted by two or more teachers, male and female, and the said children to be taught reading, writing, arithmetic, gardening, agriculture, carding, spinning, weaving, and sewing, according to their ages and sexes, and such other branches of useful knowledge as the President of the U.S. may prescribe” The school was to cost not to exceed $3,000 per annum. The commandant at Fort Crawford was to frequently visit and inspect the institution,—so also were the Indian agents of the district and the governor of Illinois. It was to the charge of this enterprise, which was located on Yellow river, in what is now Fairview township, Allamakee county. Iowa.—the first permanent white settlement in that county,— that Dr. Lowrey was ordered with Colonel Thomas as farmer. The mission building was erected in 1834 and opened in 1835. Dr. Lowrey, however, had previously conducted his educational labors among the Winnebagoes at Prairie du Chien. In 1840, the mission, still in his Charge, was removed to Turkey river, also in Iowa. Dr. Lowrey appears to have been an able and energetic man, but his attempts to convert and educate the Indian children were not very successful, as the narrator points out. In 1848, the tribe were removed to Minnesota, their instructor remaining with them until they were removed to Dakota, in 1868. Lowrey died in Pierre county, Missouri an aged wife, and two sons.— Ed.

406 Brunson, sisters,—who did the teaching, while Mr. Lowrey preached to us and superintended the agency. Minerva, in after years, married one Thomas Linten, who had in early days been employed at the old agency house at the Portage. There were about forty children at the mission, all of us more or less tinctured with Winnebago blood. The English language was alone used, the grade of instruction being about the same as the average rural district school. Of course the religious teaching was wholly of the Presbyterian cast, and the children were very good Presbyterians so long as they remained at the mission; but most of them relapsed into their ancient heathenism as soon as removed from Mr. Lowrey's care. In 1840, the institution was removed to Turkey river, Iowa.

My sister was taken away in 1842, by Mr. Dousman, and placed in the Menard academy, a Catholic convent school. at Kaskaskia, Illinois, in charge of Mother Agnes, sister superior.1

1 Opened in 1836, under the patronage of Pierre Menard, a prominent Illinois pioneer fur-trader.— Ed.

In 1845, at the instance of our guardian, I returned to Prairie du Chien, and after a few months spent at that place was sent to a Presbyterian university at Lebanon, Tennessee, about thirty miles east of Nashville, where I remained a little over a year. The climate there not agreeing with me, I being on the sick list fully half my time, I went back to Prairie du Chien in the spring of 1847, thence home. There had been a great flood in Kaskaskia in 1844, and the Menard academy was in consequence removed to St. Louis, whither my sister accompanied it. She returned home in the fall of 1847, having acquired a good education and so thorough a Catholic training that she remains to this day a devout partaker of that communion.

Mr. Dousman having by this time turned over his guardianship of us to Henry M. Rice, afterwards United States senator from Minnesota, and now (1887) a resident of St. Paul, I served some time as a clerk in Mr. Rice's general Indian supply store at Prairie du Chien; but I finally gave this up 407 as too confining, and returned home. For several years

thereafter, I drifted back and forth, between the home farm and Prairie du Chien, but finally settled down in Portage in 1852.

In 1848 I was employed by Mr. Rice in helping remove the Winnebagoes from Wisconsin. He had a contract to remove them, at so much per head, to Long Prairie, Minnesota, on the Swan river, above St. Cloud; the exact head money I do not remember, but it was a considerable sum.1 Others employed by Mr. Rice in this service were Theodore Lupient, my half brother, Simon Lecuyer, a relative of Jean Lecuyer, of Portage, and John T. La Ronde. We operated independently of each other. I went, mostly, to the camps on the Lemonweir and around La Crosse, the latter being the point where the Wisconsin Indians were to be rendezvoused preparatory to their shipment to Long Prairie. I traveled alone on horseback. The Indians were

1 The treaty of October 13, 1846, concluded at Washington, sought to remove the Winnebagoes from the “neutral ground” in Iowa, to a point more remote from the centres of civilization. The movement also sought to include the Wisconsin Winnebagoes, who had not yet removed to Iowa. The Long Prairie location was selected by Henry M. Rice, who obtained it from the Ojibways. June 6. 1818, was the time that the Winnebagoes had agreed to start; but the Indians grew obstinate, wished to remain at the Winona prairie, and threatened trouble. It required shrewd management and some bravery on the part of Mr. Rice and Agent J. E. Fletcher, before the Indians could be induced peaceably to move. The sum of $20,000 was allowed by government to cover the cost of removal. For details, see Neill's *History of Minnesota* (4th edition, 1882), pp. 483–487.

A letter to me from Mr. Rice, dated St. Paul. October 14, 1887, says: “The Winnebago agency and a part of the Indians were removed to Long Prairie in 1848, under the treaty of 1846. Subsequently, straggling bands or parts of bands were removed in 1850. Long Prairie was a good country and had they been properly cared for they would have remained; but for personal motives they were induced to exchange it for a country south of the Minnesota river, which it was well known they would not he permitted to retain,— and

the Sioux outbreak (some of their young men having been accused of joining the hostiles) made their removal imperative Wisconsin was always the region they. desired. and it is doubtful if the generation of that day would have ever been content elsewhere."

See also *Wis. Hist. Coll*., v., pp. 279–282. For account of removal of Winnebagoes from Jefferson county, see Id., x., pp. 430, 431.— Ed.

408 quite widely scattered,—not in villages, but in small encampments of two or three families each. They had no definite abode, but roved about, following the game and pitching their wigwams wherever night overtook them. Going to the Indians individually, we would ask them to come to La Crosse for shipment; no inducements were offered, but we told them that it would be better to go of their own accord than have the military after them, as the latter would be sure to appear if there was any obstinacy. Generally, they seemed willing to go. I certainly never heard any objections on their part, and the family groups gradually collected, in a peaceable manner, between June and November, at La Crosse. From La Crosse they were shipped by steamer, in parties of five or six families, to St. Paul, where open farm wagons, furnished by Mr. Rice, were provided for the women, children, and goods, the bucks marching behind. By easy stages, the party camping by night, the journey from St, Paul to Long Prairie occupied four or five days. I went up with the last lot, in November, to see how they were situated.

Upon this expedition through the woods, I met several chiefs of considerable note. Kayrahmaunee was one of the most important of them all. He was a large, fine-looking man, with a Roman nose and large features. He was quite above the average in the matter of intelligence. At that time he must have been between seventy and eighty years of age. He died in 1884, near Dexterville, on the Yellow river, in Iowa. His camping place after he returned to Wisconsin was at the head of the Kickapoo river. He and his family cultivated a piece of land there, and were in reasonably prosperous circumstances. He was certainly much respected in the tribe, and exercised considerable power among his people. While styled Kayrahmaunee by the whites, because of his relationship to the

old Caramaunee (Walking Turtle), who was beside Tecumseh when the latter fell at the battle of the Thames, the Indian name of this Kickapoo river chief was Maukeektshunxka (Shaking of the Earth).

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Old Dandy was among those whom I went after in this expedition. He was perhaps seventy years old at the time, but his appearance did not indicate that age. A small, thin man, of rather insignificant appearance, he was nevertheless the only Winnebago who, since the breaking up of tribal relations in 1848, was generally respected as the chief of the tribe. Old Dandy went to Washington in 1828, in company with old Chachipkaka (War Eagle), Yellow Thunder, and my father, to interview the president. Old Dandy's camp was near the Wisconsin river dells, but we could not find him. He had made up his mind that he would not go to Long Prairie, and had given notice that it was of no use to try and induce him. He finally came in to La Crosse of his own accord, however, and repeated his determination not to go. He was not disturbed.

The Winnebagoes did not like it in Minnesota. For one thing, they were afraid of the Chippewas, who were too near Long Prairie to make it a safe place for a Winnebago. They always preferred the woods and rivers of Wisconsin, where game was plenty and life untrammeled, to existence upon a reservation, where their conduct was circumscribed by set rules, where they had to work too diligently for an existence to suit them, and the hardships were greater than in their old territory. So they soon came back. A good many returned before cold weather set in, as soon as they had got their payment at Long Prairie. I came back to Wisconsin in the early winter. after a short visit, and several of the disgusted Indians were on the steamboat from St. Paul, with me. General J. E. Fletcher, the agent for all the Winnebagoes, was also aboard. It always seemed to me that the removal was unnecessary, and involved useless hardships, as well as curtailed their general fund, for the expenses of transportation were taken out of their payment. The small proportion who remained at Long Prairie were afterwards moved to Blue Earth county,1 near Mankato, Minnesota; and thence, after a time, up the Missouri

1 The treaty of February 27, 1855, proclaimed March 23, gave them a tract eighteen miles square, on the Blue Earth river.— Ed.

410 river to the Crow and Creek reservations.1 But the Winnebagoes were dissatisfied with the water, the soil, and the lack of timber, so gained consent again to pull their stakes, this time to be floated down the Missouri to Dakota county, Nebraska, their present reservation.2 There are at this time some thirteen or fourteen hundred Indians belonging to this reservation, but not all of them are on the government pay-roll, for many are widely scattered, and wandering like gypsies over the face of the country beyond the Mississippi.

1 Because of their general distrust of all Indians. engendered by the Sioux massacre of 1862, the people of Minnesota secured the passage by congress of an act approved February 21, 1863, removing the Sioux and Winnebagoes to Usher's landing, on the Missouri river, in Dakota, where the latter were placed under Superintendent Thompson. For an account of the very great hardships suffered by these people because of this hasty removal, see *Senate Report* No. 156, “Condition of Indian Tribes,” 39th Cong., 2d Sess., p.863. The report says: “No government can permit such injuries [as the Winnebagoes have received] to go unredressed without incurring the penalty of treaties broken and justice violated.” See also, *A Century of Dishonor*, by H. H., pp. 229, 393; Mrs. Hunt gives a generally faithful account of Winnebago removals. A good statement is also in *Senate Docs*. 41st Cong., 1st Bess., Miscel. Doc. No. 136, p. 5.— Ed.

2 Treaty of March 8, 1865; ratification advised, with amendment, February 13, 1866; amendment accepted, February 20; proclaimed, March 28. This treaty gave them a tract of a hundred and twenty-eight thousand acres in the Omaha reservation, purchased from the Omahas for that purpose. They moved upon this tract in May, 1866.— Ed.

After the futile removal to Long Prairie, and the return of the majority of the Winnebagoes to their old haunts in Wisconsin, I obtained a supply of goods from B. W. Brisbois, of Prairie du Chien,3 and set up as a trader among them, on my own account. I operated

near Elroy, on the Lemonweir, on the headwaters of the Baraboo river, and at other places. Other traders in the same region with me, were Nabérer St. Germain,— now (1887) living at Necedah, and not at present in the trade,—who was employed by Miner & Weston of that village; and another man, with headquarters at Mauston, whose name I do not remember. In early days, the trader would set up a log shanty, or

3 See Brisbois' narrative, *Wis. Hist. Coil*., ix,, pp. 282 *et seq*.— Ed.

411 build one of bushes covered with earth, just large enough to spread out his packs and to bunk in. This was always near a water-course, and in the neighborhood of a good hunting ground. Generally these traders were rough as to manners, morals, and intellect; the earliest of them were French, then came the New Yorker or New Englander; while only a few had Indian blood in their veins. Usually they had a quiet enough time with the Indians, about the only trouble likely to arise being over the indignation of their native customers when all the whiskey the latter wanted was refused them. on such occasions, the trader would often suffer mobbing, and the loss of his goods. His stock exhausted by trade, the forest dealer would pack up his furs and go down to Prairie du Chien or Green Bay, and stock up again, either returning to his old shanty or seeking a new field for operations, and perhaps a change of luck.

In my day, I either put up a rude log shanty or rented a building of some settler. From this central warehouse I would start out with a team, visiting the small camps, which flitted about from place to place, following the fortunes of the hunt. When the camps got too far away from my headquarters I would shift my base nearer to theirs. The trade was profitable enough, in the beginning, but both the character of the country and of the Indians began to change. Small towns sprang up, with local dealers handling Indian supplies, which increased the competition. I was obliged, like all Indian traders, to give extensive credit. When one of my customers got deeply in my debt, I found that he would give me the lurch and go and deal with some other man, thus running several accounts at the same time, without paying up any of them. It used to be that every Indian had a sense of honor about the payment of debts, and it was safe enough for the traders to

trust him. But the red man soon came to take advantage of sharp competition, readily yielded to the numerous offers of credit which beset him, began to live beyond his means, learned from the whites the trick of defrauding creditors, and acquired an easy indifference to the importunities of those he 412 owed. They have come to understand, too, that old accounts are outlawed by the white man's law, and by act of congress their government pay is exempt from execution. So it came about that a loose morality about debts sprung up among our Indians, although, of course, there are numerous and notable exceptions. The result of it was that I lost two thousand dollars in the trade, and retiring from it in 1856 went to farming, with my mother, in the town of Caledonia, on the quarter section she had purchased there.

In 1859, I was married at Prairie du Chien, to Madeleine, the widow of Gabriel Brisbois, who was a nephew of B. W. Brisbois. We lived in Caledonia until 1883, when we removed to my present farm in the town of Albion, Jackson county, four miles northwest of Black River Falls, I having taken the position of government interpreter for the Winnebagoes of Wisconsin. We have had seven children, six of whom are living, and three of whom are still at home.

In 1873, there was another attempt to move the Winnebagoes from the state.1 Capt. Charles A. Hunt, of Melvina, Monroe county, was awarded the contract for removal. There were then about a thousand of the tribe in Wisconsin, scattered quite generally along the water-courses leading into the Wisconsin and the Mississippi south of the Black

1 In a memorial to congress, March 15, 1870, the Wisconsin legislature represented that “the interests of the residents of the northern and north-Western portions of this state, as well as the interests of the stray bands of Indians therein, imperatively demand that the said stray bands of Indians be removed and located upon a reservation at or near the headwaters of the Eau Plaine river, in the northern portion of the said state.” Act of congress, July 15, 1870, appropriated fifteen thousand or fifteen dollars per head nor “the removal of stray bands of Pottawotomies and Winnebagoes in Wisconsin to the tribes to

which they respectively belong." But as, for various reasons, the act was not carried into effect, a supplementary act of May 29, 1872, appropriated thirty-six thousand dollars for the removal of the Winnebagoes alone. The removal finally took place during the winter of 1878–74. See *Reports of Corn. Ind. Affs*. for 1870, 1872–74. One-half of the returned. The Wisconsin "strays" were of inferior Indians, and were not welcomed by the latter, rid off them.— Ed.

413 river and Wausau. Captain Hunt sent out runners among the Indians to give them notice to come into Sparta robe shipped to Nebraska. Among these runners were the late John de la Ronde, of Portage; George Goodvillage, a Winnebago, of Friendship; Joe Monekee, another Winnebago, from the Yellow-river agency, and P. Poole, who was sheriff of Columbia county in 1871–72. Most of the Indians refused to go. They had had enough of reservation life and the miseries of removal, and proposed to stay where they were until they were forced. Thereupon Captain Hunt obtained military assistance. Big Hawk was one of the chiefs among those Winnebagoes who stoutly refused to go, so it was determined to make an example of him. Big Hawk and some twenty-five or thirty others were holding a feast on the Baraboo river, three or four miles southeast of Portage. The military surprised the party, surrounded the camp, took away the arms of the Indians, and ordered them to march into Portage. They refused, whereupon Hunt went around among them and clapped handcuffs upon Big Hawk, who made no resistance. The prisoners were then marched into town, surrounded by the military. It was in December, and the roads none of the best. I saw them marched into Portage and put aboard the cars, amid considerable popular excitement, and shipped on to Sparta.

Some others were afterwards picked up easily enough, on both the Fox and the Wisconsin. As soon as they saw or heard of the troops, they came in peaceably, as a rule; in a few cases, however, the troops surrounded the camps and marched the Indians into the nearest railway towns, whence they were shipped to Sparta. In a good many camps, the troops would find only women and children, the men being off on hunting expeditions. In such cases, the women and children were put into sleighs and carried off; the men,

upon their return, finding their wigwams deserted and their families gone, would perforce follow and join them. Much hardship was suffered by all of the Indians; many died on the way, while others expired from exposure, after reaching their destination in Nebraska. The attempt at removal was successful as to several hundred Winnebagoes, but 414 probably as many more evaded pursuit and remained in Wisconsin. It had been supposed that the congressional act of removal provided that there should be no force used. Certainly the Indians were much surprised and indignant at the appearance of the military.1 Before the removal, several Of the head men went to Indian Commissioner Edward P. Smith and pleaded for protection for their people, but they did not get it. The Indians had committed no depredations, they were in nobody's way, and all of us who were friendly to them considered the removal as unjust. There came to be much popular indignation over the manner in which this futile attempt was carried out, and since that day there has been no serious attempt to disturb the Wisconsin Winnebagoes, who have so persistently

1 Instructions for military assistance to Charles A. Hunt, who represented the burean of Indian affairs, were issued by the general of the army ( *Report Secy. of War*, 1874, p. 38). Company C, 20th infantry, and a detail from Company H, were ordered December 15, 1873, under command of Lieutenant Joseph S. Stafford. to proceed from Fort Snelling to Sparta. They arrived there by train, December 17, and were quartered in the skating-park building. From Sparta, detachments were sent out to Portage and Leroy, when needed, and to places in Iowa. Friday, December 18, Stafford,with twenty men, accompanied Agent Hunt, and captured eighty. six Winnebagoes, including Big Hawk, “on the Baraboo river, near the Crawford bridge.”—( *Portage Register*, December 27, 1873.) They were lodged in Sparta over Sunday, and at 11 A. M. of Monday, December 22, left by train for Nebraska, in charge of Sheriff David Bon and six citizens. On the 23d of December, seventy-three Indians were captured near Leroy station; two days later, fifty-six in Trempealeau county; and on the 27th, Mr. Cash, of New Lisbon, headed a party of soldiers who captured thirty eight near Reedsburg.—See *Sparta Herald* during December, 1873.

H. W. Lee. of Stevens Point, interested himself in seeking to obtain writs of habeas corpus for the imprisoned Indians, but in vain. See his letter copied from *Chicago Times*, in *Sparta Herald*, December 30, 1873. The United States attorney-general gave it as his opinion, June 17, 1873, that “no authority is given in any of the acts of congress, providing funds for the removal of said Indians, to employ force against the will of said Indians.” On the 19th of January, 1874, the object for which the troops were detailed having been accomplished, they were ordered by Brigadier General A, H. Terry, division commander, to return to Fort Snelling.— Ed.

415 clung to their native woods and streams, despite the advance of civilization around them.

There are about fifteen hundred Winnebagoes now living in Wisconsin. Some fourteen hundred are now on the payroll. By act of congress, January 18, 1881, it was provided that there should be a census taken of both those in Nebraska and those in Wisconsin. All those in Wisconsin before that date were to be enrolled in this state, and those then in Nebraska were to be enrolled there.1 The result was that those who returned from Nebraska to Wisconsin after that date,—and one or two hundred have done so,—are not entitled to enrollment here; hence cannot, except by misrepresentation, get government pay. This is the penalty for making a change of residence, although I believe that any Wisconsin Winnebago who should care to go to Nebraska would find no difficulty in getting himself removed from the Wisconsin roll to the Nebraska. But this is not likely, for they do not enjoy life on the reservation, the universal complaint there being that they cannot earn enough from the land to support themselves, and that the government payment is too small to do any good; while the government officers and interpreters there

1 Section 15, act of congress approved March 3, 1875, provided that any Indian who was head of a family and twenty-one years old, and had abandoned tribal relations, should be entitled to the benefits of the homestead act of May 20, 1862. Such Indian homestead is declared not subject to encumbrance or alienation, and any such Indian homesteader

is entitled to his share of tribal annuities, funds, lands, and other property, the same as though he had maintained tribal relations. Under this act, a great many Wisconsin Winnebagoes took up claims of forty acres each. Act of congress approved January 18, 1881, directed the secretary of the interior to have separate censuses taken of the Winnebagoes in Wisconsin and Nebraska, and adjust the accounts between the two bands. Under the act of June 25, 1864, a fund amounting to $96,689.93 had accumulated in the United States treasury to the credit of the Wisconsin band; besides much that was due them out of sums already paid to the Nebraska band. The act of 1881 sought to secure the pro rata payment of interest on the fund due the former, but only to those heads who had taken up homesteads or who should promise to spend the money in at once taking up and improving land.— Ed.

416 have favorites among the head men, and the average Indian gets no justice done him. Of course very much of this complaint is ill-based. The Indian does not stop to reason, but jumps at conclusions. The man who is on the Wisconsin roll considers himself fortunate, for here he has a free and easy roving life, without reservation restrictions; and he gets a cash payment from the government, whereas on the reservation it comes in the guise of tools and supplies—for the former of which he is not over desirous.

I helped take the Winnebago census in 1881, the bureau agent being Louis Morel, U.S.A. We were stationed in succession at Black River Falls, Trempealeau, La Crosse, Portage, Menasha, Stevens Point, Friendship, Madison, Baraboo, Remington, back again to La Crosse, and completed our task at Blue River, near Boscobel. Our habit was to send out runners among the Indians and invite them to come in wherever our office was established. Mr. Morel being taken sick, his clerk and I were alone in many places. About eight hundred came in readily enough, but there were some two hundred and fifty, chiefly belonging to Big Hawk's band, at Pike lake, who refused to be counted.

It seems that H. W. Lee, a Stevens Point lawyer, asserted that the Winnebagoes owed him ten thousand dollars as attorney fees. He set up the claim that during the eight years

previous to 1881 he had been of great service to the tribe and had gone to Washington several times in their behalf; that, in fact, he was the cause of getting the act of March 3, 1873, passed for the relief of the Winnebagoes. This act provided for regular annual payments, although they did not, for various reasons, commence until ten years later. Lee persuaded Big Hawk and his followers to refuse enrollment until a promise should be extracted from the government that he (Lee) should be reimbursed out of the payments which were to succeed the taking of the census. Few of the Indians outside of this particular band endorsed the claim, believing that Lee had already been sufficiently compensated.

As so many refused enrollment, the attempt at census taking 417 in 1881 was a failure. In 18831 it was repeated, and this time with success. Maj. Walter F. Halleck, U. S. A., of Michigan, was appointed to complete the Winnebago census. He came to the state, and Anthony Grignon officiated as his interpreter. The roll was now made up to something over eleven hundred, and in November Major Halleck made the first payments to the Wisconsin Winnebagoes, at Black River Falls and Stevens Point, my services now being employed as interpreter, in which capacity I have since served the government, at the three payment places of Black River Falls, Tomah, and Hatley. The money had been accumulating since 1873, so there was now some forty thousand dollars to distribute among the Indians who were on the roll. Big Hawk's people refused their money at the Stevens Point payment, and indeed they have ever since declined to have anything to do with it, and all on account of Lee's claim, which they honestly believe to be a just one. But the band has fast decreased in numbers, as the temptation of the accumulating money becomes stronger, and the influence of the payment Indians—who think Big Hawk a foolish man—predominates. There are now left of his party but twenty-five or thirty persons,—Big Hawk himself, and some of the Snake family. Some of this band, who have come in lately, have received as high as nine hundred dollars per head, and one of those who still hangs out (Two Crows) would get twelve hundred and twenty dollars if he would but consent to draw it. Whatever may be said of Lee's claim, it certainly indicates a strong

sense of personal honor in Big Hawk and his companions, that, sincerely believing in the demand, they are willing to sacrifice so much for a nice question of moral principle.

1 Act approved March 3, 1883, appropriated $2,500 to complete the census.— Ed.

Big Hawk is about sixty years of age. He is a descendant of the famous chief Kayrahmaunee (Walking Turtle). He is a young-looking, finely-formed Indian, some five feet ten inches in height, with small moustaches; he is sober, of 27 418 good habits, and with a high sense of honor, and by those who stand by him is looked up to with much admiration. He has a regulation homestead of forty acres on Pike lake, in Marathon county, a portion of which he cultivates, eking out an existence by hunting. During the removal of 1873, Captain Hunt took Big Hawk in shackles to Nebraska, because the chief declined to go unless forced. But the other members of his band made up a purse and soon brought him back to Pike lake. lie is a good, peaceable man, but I am afraid will never get his accumulated bounty; for I am sure that he will remain loyal to the supposed interests of his friend Lee, and the latter seems not at all likely to ever have his claim allowed.1

1 Big Hawk called on me in 1890, and he and his son Jasper were photographed for the Society's collection of portraits of typical Wisconsin Indians. Paquette's description of the old man is just. He proved a courteous and intelligent visitor, and has no appearance of having been physically or morally injured by contact with the whites. Jasper, a young man of some twenty-four years, told me with much pride that he was sending his children to a district school, and believed thoroughly in white men's civilization.— Ed.

Although but few over eleven hundred were on the roll by November, 1883, the number enrolled at each succeeding annual payment has gradually increased, until in February, 1887, the number was about fourteen hundred. This addition was partly due from the appearance of some who had been in hiding during the census-taking of 1881 and 1883, from fear of removal; partly from the steady increase, each year, in the number of births

over the deaths, and partly from Nebraska runaways, a few of whom manage to get on the rolls through misrepresentation. There are probably about one hundred more who either cannot get on the roll, or who, like Big Hawk's band, do not wish to.

The act of congress providing for payments to the Wisconsin Winnebagoes specified that each householder must take up a homestead of at least forty acres, build a house upon it with his own means, and otherwise improve it. There being no one to look after the matter and properly enforce the law, the result has been a somewhat haphazard 419 allotment of land. Some of the Indians made intelligent selections; while others would blindly put a finger down anywhere on a surveyor's chart, that would be placed before them, quite regardless of where the property was, so long as the duty of selection was performed, and the annuity secured. At the payments, we can be assured that the indian has his homestead, but whether he has a house upon, or has otherwise improved it, there is no way of knowing except by general report. The result is that but a half or two-thirds of them have buildings upon their places, while the majority of the rest have probably never even seen their landed possessions; many, indeed, who have gone to hunt them up, have found that they were located in swamps or on barren hill-sides. The Winnebago homesteads, mainly forty acres each, are chiefly in Jackson, Adams, Marathon, and Shawano counties, the bulk of them being in Jackson county; the soil is especially poor in Adams, and quite light in Jackson.

None of the Indian homesteaders are even fair farmers. But even a white man could not make a living on many of their small patches of sand. I presume that they chose these rather forbidding sections because they were in the neighborhood of their old hunting grounds, and because of the blueberries, which, in Jackson especially, are an important crop. The berries grow chiefly on the highlands, and the Indians are the principal garnerers. The fruit begins to ripen about the last of July, and the picking holds out until the last of August, keeping the bulk of the Indians of both sexes quite busy, and bringing them in a respectable income while it lasts. Leaving their homes, they camp in wigwams and in canvas tents upon the picking grounds. A first-rate picker, in a good season, can

gather by hand from a bushel to a bushel and a half in a day; while some, who have rakes adapted to the purpose, can do very much better than this. The berries are poured into narrow boxes holding a bushel each, and one can be strapped on each side of a pony. Leaving the women and children to do the gathering, the bucks start early in the morning with the harvest of the day before and ride into the nearest town,— 420 Black RiverFalls is the principal market,—where the product is picked up by the buyers, who place the berries in shallow trays for shipment by express to the various centres of demand. The Indians sometimes get as high as three dollars a bushel at the commencement of the season, when the fruit is scarce, the price dwindling down to seventy-five cents at the flush of the supply. This of course is quite a fortune for the Indians so long as it lasts, but first-rate crops are two years apart.

After the blueberry crop is over, the Winnebagoes have before them the cranberry harvest. They are hired as pickers by the owners of the marshes, being paid from fifty to seventy-five cents per bushel.

In the winter comes the annuity payment, at Black River Fails. Tomah, and Hatley, the heads of families coming in to whichever point is the most convenient of access. Black River Fails is the chief rallying point. As the Indians generally ride free on the railroads, despite the inter-state commerce law, and time being counted as worthless, they are not usually particular about the distance they have to travel. At the payment made in February, 1887, the annuity consisted of nineteen dollars and forty cents for each person —a considerable sum for the largest families. The inducement to have a numerous progeny is powerful, and the Indians take advantage of the premium thus placed by the government on child-bearing. Between the payments of 1886 and 1887, there were fifty-six births reported, as against about thirty deaths. The annuity, however, makes the Indians dependent, shiftless creatures, being a premium on pauperism, and many of them are beginning to complain that they do not get on as well as they did without aid. Indeed, the payment is a decided evil to the poor fellows; it makes them an object of interest to rapacious traders, who follow them about at payment time, a lot of sharks, plying them

with liquor, doubling their claims against them, and not content until the last dollar is gone; many a man gets home to his large family, having drank, squandered, or gambled, or been duped out of, every cent the government gave him. Some of the sights behind the 421 scenes, at an Indian payment, are enough to make one's heart bleed for the poor wretches who are too simple to take care of themselves, and need a firm, wise friend as badly as any lot of foolish boys ever did.

I have said that the Wisconsin Winnebagoes were-none of them even fair farmers. They are a race of hunters. Even where they have houses upon their little reservations, few of the habitations are regularly used. The Indians prefer the wigwams which adorn every door-yard; especially is this the case in summer, when the house is scarcely used at all. But the most of them are seldom at home. In the spring they scratch up the ground a little with hoes-very few of them use plows—plant their corn in a crude fashion, and then go off into the woods, hunting and fishing, until time to hoe the crop. This task over, they go off until gathering time, and then are away for the most of the winter until spring again. Here and there is a family that has come to believe it is better to stay at home in winter, and enjoy the comforts there, than to go tramping off through the woods, with imminent danger of contracting rheumatism and deadly colds. But such philosophers are few.

The winter's hunt usually commences early in October and is kept up till the first of May. The families start out, sometimes independently and sometimes in parties of five or six lodges, following the game hither and thither. Sometimes there is established a large camp,—say from half a dozen to tell families,—from which hunting parties are sent out in different directions to beat the neighborhood for game. These parties will be gone for a week or so, and bring back their meat and skills. They are quite industrious in their hunting habits. and are fully as successful as good white hunters would be under similar conditions. In old days, when game was more plenty, an Indian would ordinarily get the equivalent of at least one hundred dollars for the product of his winter's hunt; but now the season usually nets him between fifty and seventy-five dollars. There is one source of income that the Indian hunters now have, that was unknown of old. 422 Venison can

always be sold at the nearest railway station for seven or eight cents per pound for the saddle, the only part that they sell, as a rule, for they live on the rest. A good hunter can kill four or five deer per day, when game is plenty.

They do not take many black bears now-a-days. The beavers, too, are nearly all gone, though otters and mink are quite plenty, and there are a good many fishers, although the latter are chiefly in the northern part of the state, on the hunting grounds of the Chippewas. The Chippewas come down as far south as the Chippewa river, to hunt. The two tribes do not entrench on each other's territory very much, and troubles between them are unknown, even when they meet on the same hunting ground. Around Wausau, the Chippewas, Menomonees, Pottawattomies, and Winnebagoes mingle freely and intermarry.

The Winnebagoes enjoy company. They are companionable. Their motto is, “The more the merrier,” and they will sacrifice a good deal for pleasure. The days pass with them in hunting, gossiping, gambling, and listless loafing. Some of them are inveterate talkers. and they are often confirmed practical jokers. Very few of the tribe are quarrelsome, except when in liquor. There is no social grading among them; a pure democracy exists: the days of the chieftancy are over, as the Wisconsin Winnebagoes no longer entertain tribal relations; and while there is naturally much respect entertained for the descendants of former chiefs and for those who are by nature leaders, each Indian boasts himself quite the equal of the best man among them. The result of this free-and-easy independence is, that the vicious and the dissolute of either sex are hail-fellows-well-met in any camp, whatever opinions may be entertained of them in private, by their companions.

In January, during the hunt, there are numerous formal feasts. A head man of a family will send out indiscriminate invitations to all the Winnebagoes in the neighborhood to come to a free-for-all feast at his lodge. He will then call upon others of his family to collect venison and bear. meat for the occasion. This duty generally falls on the nephews, 423 for it is a singular custom among them that the nephew is a sort of slave to the uncle and owes him far stricter obedience than he does his own father. The uncle who calls on his

nephew to perform a certain act or do a certain errand expects the young man to do it at whatever risk of limb or wind. But the nephew has some privileges in return. He has but to make a present to his uncle and lay his hand on whatever belongs to the latter that he may be wanting,—a fine horse, or a new gun, for instance,—and say, “You've had this long enough; now I'll take care of it,” and the thing he claims is his, without further ado. But to return to the feast. All the way from fifty to one hundred often gather at these meetings. Usually commencing at twilight, they continue all night; eating, dancing, singing and story-telling being the order of exercises. Probably the most popular of their dances is the buffalo dance. They represent themselves to be bisons, imitating the legitimate motions and noises of that animal, and introducing a great many others that would quite astonish the oldest buffalo in existence. Of course it has been a long time since any Winnebagoes ever saw buffaloes; their antics are purely traditionary, handed down from former generations of dancers. Once in a while, on such occasions, there will be some fire-water introduced by one or two reckless young scamps, but ordinarily these feasts are not drunken orgies.

After the hunting season, the Indians usually go directly home, selling their furs to the nearest trader, after they get there: unless there should chance to be a trader near the hunting grounds, when they dispose of their goods to him in order to lighten their load.

As among nearly, if not quite, all the tribes of American aborigines, a secret society exists among the Winnebagoes.1 The only name I ever heard it called is “Medicine.” So far as I have been able to learn, the chief theoretical object of the fraternity is, to keep the virtues of medicinal herbs and the details of medical practice generally, as secrets

1 Schoolcraft's *History of the Indian Tribes of the United States* (1851–57), iii., p. 286.—Ed.

424 among a chosen few, and hand them down from one generation to another. Medical practice among the Indians,1 —and when I speak of Indians I must be understood as referring to the Winnebagoes, with whose customs and language I am alone familiar,—

is very crude, yet in certain classes of cases it seems to be sufficient. In the treatment of wounds and chronic sores, the Indian medicine men are more successful, so far as my observation goes, than the average white surgeons. In such cases, they dress the wounds very carefully, and apply poultices of herbs. In cases of sickness, peculiar concoctions of herbs and roots are used, with sweats and rubbings. Of course this is accompanied by mystic ceremonials and incantations, which I imagine are chiefly thrown in for effect; I do not think the medicine men themselves believe in them. When a medicine man is needed, it is customary to tender him a present in advance, as a sort of retaining fee. Indeed, many will not respond to a call without such fee. If, in due course of time, the patient dies on the medicine man's hands, or is thought by the family to be unimproved, the latter is discharged and is expected to give back all of the fees he has received up to date. A new man is then patronized, on the same terms—"No cure, no pay."

1 *Ibid*., p. 497.— Ed.

The secret society is conducted by these medicine men. Fully one-half of the tribe—men and women, and youths of both sexes—belong; possibly a majority of them do. When a person wishes to join, and is accepted by the fraternity, he must accumulate a heap of goods as an initiation fee. Before the government payments, it sometimes took years to make this accumulation; but since the inauguration of the payments, money is somewhat easier among them. Indeed, the demands of the society swallow up no small portion of the government annuity. These initiation fees are given to the head medicine man of the neighborhood, who is supposed to divide them among the fraternity, but it is a matter of general notoriety that he keeps the lion's share. The medicine meetings2 are usually

2 *Ibid*., p. 286.— Ed.

425 held just after the return home from the payment. Sometimes one novice is initiated at once, sometimes two or three. The meeting will ordinarily last all day and sometimes through the succeeding night, for time is no object to the Indian. The meeting is held in a long lodge, especially erected for the purpose, and is open to all comers. There

is a great deal of mystification, in the way of secret whisperings from ear to ear, and seemingly nonsensical ceremonial, interspersed with long and tiresome harangues about the traditions of the tribe and its spirit mythology. In the midst of all this, and without interrupting the performance in the lodge, the candidate is led off into the bushes by two or three “big” medicine men. What transpires there, I do not know but the candidate always comes back, after about ten minute's absence, pale with fright and much exhausted. He is given a medicine bag, consisting of the dried skin of an otter or beaver, with the head and tail preserved, made into the form of a pouch. There is more talking, dancing, whispering, and jerky movements, and the novice is then declared a full-fledged medicine man. As a matter of fact, however, very few among them ever practice. The instruction is altogether too brief to be of service. Usually only persons well on in years take upon themselves the office and title of medicine men—and but few of those, for the position is not very lucrative. Belonging to the secret society, of itself, merely gives them the right to practice. Occasionally an Indian doctor gets employment among the whites. For instance, a Winnebago woman has just now a fair practice in Black River Falls; and “Doc” Decorah, of Adams county,—nephew of Spoon Decorah,—had, some years back, a good run of patronage in Reedsburg. But the Indian practitioners complain that many of the whites are not the best of pay, and, while pleased to boast of their white patronage, are generally less anxious to respond to such calls than to those of their own race.

I have spoken of gambling among the Indians. It is their commonest vice. The moccasin game is the chief one. It somewhat resembles three-card-monte, except that 426 I do not think there is any cheating about it. The players squat on the ground in two groups, facing each other; any number may be on a side,—one or a dozen,—and the sides need not be equal in numbers. On the ground between the two groups, four moccasins are placed in a row. The leader of the side that has the “deal.” so to speak, takes a small bead in his right hand and deftly slides the hand under each moccasin in turn, pretending to leave the bead under each one of them; he finally does leave the bead under one, and the leader of the opposition side, watching him closely, is to guess which moccasin covers the bead. The

opposition leader then takes a slender stick and lifts up and throws off the three moccasins under which he thinks nothing has been left, leaving the one under which he guesses the bead has been left. Should the bead be discovered under one of the three which he throws off, then he loses four points for his side; should he be correct in his guess, and the bead found under the one moccasin left, he gains four for his side. Ten small twigs or chips are conveniently at hand, and as each side wins at a play, the leader takes four from the pile. When the ten are all taken, by either or both sides, the game is ended, the side having the most sticks being the winner. Usually five such games are played, the side getting the greater number taking the stakes, which are commonly goods—although once in a while they gamble for money.

The vigorous game of la crosse—now-a-days familiar to patrons of state and county fairs of this section, at which professional bands of Chippewas exhibit their skill—was in earlier days much played by the Winnebagoes. It was usually played at La Crosse,—Prairie la Crosse deriving its name from this fact,—during the general rendezvous after the winter's hunt. The Winnebagoes having always clung to the water-courses and heavy timber, during their winter's trapping and hunting, would float down the rivers to La Crosse, and there have their feasts and la crosse games, meet the traders and indulge in a big spree. Occasionally they played la crosse in their villages, but this was not common. It was considered to be more 427 especially a spring festival game. I never hear, now-a-days, of the Wisconsin Winnebagoes playing it, and in fact I never saw it in this state, but when I was at the mission on Turkey river, I frequently saw the Indians there indulge in it. It is needless to add, I presume, that these games were always for heavy stakes in goods; you will seldom get an Indian to play “for fun.”

Among the Winnebagoes, the institution of the family is held in high regard, and relations are very tenacious of each other's rights.1 No marriage ceremony is known. Presents to the parents of a woman, by either the parents of the man or the man himself, if accepted, usually secure her for a partner. However much the woman may dislike the man, she considers it her bounden duty to go and at least try to live with him. Divorce is easy among

them. There are no laws compelling them to live together. Sometimes there are marriages for a specified time, say a few months or a year. When separations occur, the woman usually takes the children with her to the home of her parents. But so long as the union exists, it is deemed to be sacred, and there are very few instances of infidelity. I think that, considering the lack of all marriage law among them, these Indians make a better showing of marital fidelity and constancy than would be exhibited in the average white community. Quite a number of the bucks have two wives, who live on apparently equal, free-and-easy terms; but although there is no rule about the matter, I never heard of any of the men having more than two wives. With all this ease of divorce, numerous Indian couples remain true to each other for life. For instance, old Kayrahmaunee, whom I knew, had never but the one wife with whom he always lived. On the other hand; I could mention Doc Decorah, who is living with his tenth wife, but he has had her since 1873 and they appear to agree very well. The young, unmarried women of to-day are, as a result of white influence, not as strict in their behavior as was the rule in earlier days.

1 *Id*., ii., p. 48.— Ed.

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The Winnebagoes are by no means the worst Indians in the state. In some respects they are the best. Socially they are more moral than most of the others; they are good-hearted, have always been friendly to American interests,—the Red Bird affair in 1827 was in no sense a tribal outbreak,—they are extremely tractable, injure no one's legitimate interests, and mind their own business; the remarkable pertinacity with which they have clung to the Wisconsin streams and forests, despite numerous attempted removals, argues a degree of patriotism for their native state, to which no white Badger, who entertains any pride of birthplace, should object. Could they but have a government agent settled amongst them, as was recommended to congress by the commissioner of Indian affairs in 1886, their condition might be materially bettered. The homestead improvement law should be enforced; they should be instructed in better agricultural methods than they have thus far adopted; they should be taught that a nomadic life is not in the end as profitable as

staying at home and carrying on legitimate farming; they should be forced to send their children to the district schools, where the white teachers and pupils are willing and anxious to receive them, and where the few young aborigines who have thus far attended have made encouraging progress; in short, these people are like a pack of children, who need a patient instructor and friend; they are willing enough to advance, if continually urged to the task, in season and out of season. Agents who have the necessary qualifications, and who are above collusion with tricky traders, are unfortunately rare, as the history of our Indian agencies too well shows; but it is not impossible to get such a man for the Wisconsin Winnebagoes. Given a practical guide of this sort, these people would, I am sure, make speedy and substantial advancement.

In the course of my life-long experience with the Winnebagoes, I have met many chiefs whose names are prominently connected with the history of the tribe. Among these was Yellow Thunder. He was forcibly removed to Iowa, with Black Wolf, but was soon allowed to return to 429 Wisconsin because he was a land-owner. When I knew him, he lived on a forty-acre patch that he had bought from the government, some sixteen miles above Portage, on the Wisconsin river. He died in the fifties. He was a fine-looking Indian, tall, straight, and stately, but had an over-weening love for fire-water.—his only vice. He died well advanced in age, but I think never had any children.1 It is seldom you see a childless lodge among the Winnebagoes; large families are the rule. I remember that in 1883, Green Grass, a son of the famous Kayrahmaunee, came to the payment at Black River Falls and wanted to draw for fifteen children, bus he was unable to either count or name them all; so Major Halleck, the agent, gold him to bring his family in and stand them in a row, so that we could count them for ourselves and ask each one his name. Green Grass soon returned with his brood, and stood them in a double row across the room. There was the full number certified, and the incident occasioned much hilarity among both Indians and officials.

1 An oil portrait of Yellow Thunder may be seen in the portrait gallery of the Society. References to most of these chiefs mentioned by the narrator may be found in the earlier

volumes of Wis. Hist. Coll. But in tracing the careers of Indian chiefs, much discrimination must be exercised on account of the conflict of names. Often a half-dozen Indians of the same family bore nearly identical names among the whites, who did not care to discriminate; while the official interpreters were generally careless in this matter. The Indians, in a spirit of courtesy, would often adopt the fanciful names given to them by their white neighbors. In interviewing old Winnebagoes, I have, mere than once, been wholly unable to make known to my would be informants what particular chief I meant to inquire after,—their name for him, and that set down in the records, being wholly at variance.— Ed.

The oldest Wisconsin Winnebago now living (1887) is Little Decorah, who has a place near Millston, Jackson county.2 He is the oldest son of the late Grey-headed Decorah. I suppose that Little Decorah must be about one hundred years of age. I remember that he seemed to me an old man as far back as 1836. He is now a childish, helpless

2 Little Decorah died near Tomah, at Blue Wing's settlement, a few days after the above interview, about April 1, 1887.— Ed.

430 wreck. Spoon Decorah, of Adams county, a cousin or this man, is the oldest of the tribe in this state, whose faculties are well preserved;1 although Four Deer, also of Adams county, is accounted to be nearly as old. Each of them claims to be upwards of ninety years, but they are probably much younger than that. Black Hawk, who has a homestead four miles northeast of Black River Falls, in the town of Albion, Jackson county, claims to be seventy, probably an exaggeration of ten years. He is a large, imposing fellow, of good habits, and a good reputation among the whites. He has two wives, and although he has lost several children he still has nearly a dozen left. This Black Hawk is a distant relative of a Winnebago warrior named Black Hawk, who claimed to have discovered the celebrated Sac chief of the same name, when the latter was a fugitive after the battle of Bad Axe, in August, 1832. It is related by the descendants of the Winnebago Black Hawk of that day, that One-eyed Decorah (Big Canoe) had a village at the mouth of the Black river, and every day various hunting parties would go out into the neighborhood after game.2

The Winnebago Black Hawk was out one day, when he came across the Sac fugitive, and immediately returned to camp and notified his companions. There was a council as to who should go and take the Sac, the Indian agent at Prairie du Chien having given general instructions to all Winnebagoes to bring in the runaway. Winnebago Black Hawk declined to go himself, as he claimed to entertain a superstitious notion that he was not “called” by the Great Spirit to do that kind of work.

1 Spoon Decorah died October 13, 1887, near Necedah, at the probable age of eighty-four. I interviewed him the March preceding, in company with Moses Paquette, and the venerable savage paid me a return call in Madison during the intervening summer, in company with Four Deer, Doctor Decorah, and a half-breed interpreter from Portage. Spoon was a fine specimen of his race, physically and mentally. Four Deer is the orator of his tribe, and has a somewhat stately appearance. Doctor Decorah is the head medicine man, has a comical physiognomy, and is much of a wit.— Ed.

2 Some say that this village was on the La Crosse river, near where Salem now is.— Paquette.

431 So One-eyed Decorah took the task upon himself, went and found the Sac leader, and took him into Prairie du Chien.1 I knew One-eyed Decorah, when I was a boy at school, on Turkey river. He was an old man then; quite stout and hale, with heavy features, and hair somewhat sprinkled with gray.

1 See *ante*, p. 261, note.— Ed.

Young Winneschick is now living on the Black river, seven miles above Black River Falls. He is about sixty years old, and a good Indian; he is the head man in Jackson county, being a descendant of the famous Winneschick. He has but one wife and no children. lie returned from the reservation to his native state in 1872 or 1873, and is now doing fairly well on his little purchased farm of forty acres, his homestead being some four or five miles

away. Cultivating his land with reasonable display of energy, he is regarded by the whites as a progressive Indian, and has a good reputation among them.2

2 Young Winneschick died about May 20, 1887.— Ed.

White Pawnee (Pania Blanc), a son of the one-eyed chief White Crow,3 accompanied my father as guide during the Black Hawk war. He died in 1837, in a drunken fracas with a white man named Abraham Wood. The affair took place in a whiskey shop near where the Carpenter house was afterwards located,—the neighborhood of the Wisconsin-river end of the old transportation route at the Portage. The Pawnee was buried in a large conical mound some five or six feet high, at what is now the city end of the Wisconsin-river bridge—just across the river from where our house was afterwards located. These ancient earthworks were frequently selected as burial places by the Indians, because of their prominence in the landscape. I never heard the Winnebagoes talk about the origin of these mounds. I presume that they have always taken them to be of natural formation. Their name for them is “hchi-a-shoke,” which simply means, “a small rising of ground.” This particular mound

3 See *ante*, p. 245, *note*.— Ed.

432 has lately been graded down, in street improvements, but whether the Pawnee's bones were found in it or not I do not know.

Little Hill used to camp on the knoll at the country end of the Wisconsin-river bridge at Portage, about where our house was subsequently built. In a fire-water row there, in 1837 or 1838, he murdered another Indian, whereupon he fled to the west of the Mississippi to escape vengeance. I afterward frequently met him at the Yellow river agency. He was a short, thick-set man. He afterwards became a very good Indian, and old Mr. Lowrey made a chief of him as a reward of merit.1 Little Hill died a good many years ago.

1 Shogonikkaw (Little Hill) furnished Agent Jonathan E. Fletcher with some Winnebago myths, to be found in *Schoolcraft*, iv., p. 228; see also *Wis. Hist. Coll*., v., p. 309.— Ed.

I want to close my narrative with an account of the condition of the grave of my father, Pierre Paquette.2 His remains were originally buried under the Catholic chapel which had been built by him on what is now known as Conant street, near the northeast corner of Adams. The land then belonged to the government, but afterwards a strip of territory was granted to Lecuyer, across the marsh, along the transportation route, and it included this place. Webb & Bronson3 succeeded to the possession of the Lecuyer claim. The little chapel was afterward burned down, and a wooden railing was placed around the grave, to mark the spot. A wooden cross, unpainted and uninscribed, was the only monument. In 18574 the remains were removed and placed under the rear doorway of the new church, built on the old site; but there was nothing ever put up to mark the grave, nothing to show to the world that under the door-sill my father lay.

2 *Wis. Hist. Coll*., viii., p. 319; *Hist. Columbia Co*., p. 626.— Ed.

3 *Hist. Columbia Co*., p. 591.— Ed.

4 *Ibid*. says 1852.— Ed.

In 1859 or 18605 the church authorities purchased the old Baptist church lot, in another part of the city, and abandoned

5 October 29, 1859.— Ed.

433 their building on the northeast corner of Adams and Conant streets. They sold the old church lot, but the remains of Pierre Paquette are still where they were. The old building has been removed, and no one can tell exactly where the grave is, except that it is in a dingy alleyway, over which teams travel daily. Two years ago, the church people made a

meagre attempt to find the bones, but the workmen never went low enough or far enough, and the search has not been pushed.

I submit that this treatment of Pierre Paquette's bones by the successors of those for whom he erected the first mission chapel at the Portage is ungenerous.1 28

1 In March, 1887, I visited the site of Pierre Paquette's grave, in company with the narrator. An old settler, who was present, agreed with the narrator as to the general location, both estimating that they could fix the locality within a radius of a dozen feet. In regard to the merit of the narrators protest, I know nothing.— Ed.